

August 17, 2000  
Midge Swickard  
490-425 Highway 139  
Susanville, Ca. 96130

**RECEIVED**

AUG 28 2000

**CALFED Bay-Delta Program**

Steve Ritchie  
Acting Executive Director  
Cal-Fed Bay-Delta Program  
1416 Ninth St. Suite 1155  
Sacramento, Ca. 95814

Dear Mr. Ritchie and Cal-Fed Members,

This letter shall serve as my comments on your final environmental report released on July 21, 2000. Initially, I am quite disturbed and discouraged with your exceedingly short timeline of 30 days to submit comments on the thousands of pages of the report and with your refusal to hold any further public hearings on the plan. For an organization that was premised on consensus building to solve the Bay-Delta's water plans, your methodology seems to indicate a preconceived bureaucratic agenda attempting to make an end run around public input from notice and comment procedures.

The current Cal-Fed plan will remove nearly a quarter of a million acres from agricultural production. This is termed "unavoidable" in the report. Nothing is "unavoidable" unless the problem is approached with an initial set of predetermined assumptions. The error in your predetermined assumptions is that the removal of this acreage from irrigation and cultivation will have no deleterious effects on the environment and will improve the Bay-Delta Estuary.

Farmland is important and often essential wildlife habitat for waterfowl, a variety of mammals and the prey animals that feed on them. The removal of this land from production will have a devastating effect on overall wildlife numbers and a minimal positive effect on the Bay-Delta. Farmers cannot run productive wildlife-friendly farms unless they have reliable and affordable water. Removal of this water will convert thousands of acres of the Central Valley into desert wasteland drastically affecting air quality and destroying a significant habitat for California's wildlife.

The alternatives that Cal-Fed needs to explore further are (1) longer public comment period and public hearings on final report; (2) immediate planning of reservoir storage sites for environmental and urban water storage to eliminate Ag water reductions; (3) expend public funds for existing government land wildlife habitat development rather than further purchases of private land by state and federal government entities; and (4) economic incentives to private landowners to develop wildlife habitat to exist concurrent with irrigated agriculture.

The above alternatives should be prioritized above other Cal-Fed programs. Taking water away from agriculture to service "environmental" concerns is shortsighted, unnecessary and will actually damage overall wildlife habitat in California. Please do not allow this type of thinking to prevail in the Cal Fed Process.

Sincerely Yours,

Midge Swickard